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A REALIST CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS WITHIN THE FOIP FRAMEWORK

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Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....1

Introduction2

Methodological Approach: Critical Discourse Analysis4

Literature Review7

International Relations Theory: Realist Constructivism..... 10

 Classical Realism 11

 Structural Realism 12

 Constructivism 14

 Realist Constructivism..... 16

 Conclusion..... 18

Realist Constructivism in Practice: Historical Background and an Analysis of the FOIP 19

 WWII and Early Post-War Years 20

 Key Developments during the Cold War 21

 Relations in the Post-Cold War Period 23

 The Path to the FOIP and its Contents 25

 Current Japan-PRC Relations through the Lens of Realist Constructivism 27

Conclusion 29

Bibliography 33

Introduction

The “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” (FOIP) strategy was first announced under its current name by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in a policy speech to the National Diet in early 2018. While summarizing this policy, Abe appealed to what he called “fundamental values”, namely “freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.” In short, the goal of the FOIP strategy is to ensure that the bodies of water that make up the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific remain open for maritime navigation. Abe separately mentioned Japan’s intention to maintain “peace and prosperity” in the Indo-Pacific region and that Japan would promote all of the aforementioned values in cooperation with members of ASEAN¹, EU, Australia, India and the US (Abe, Policy Speech to the 196th Session of the Diet). Abe’s words make the policy sound very ambitious, both from the perspective of living up to the standards of these values, as well as from the perspective of the geographical scope of this strategy. However, at a closer look, an important player in the Indo-Pacific region seems to be missing from the list of countries mentioned earlier, namely the People’s Republic of China (PRC)². Abe *does* separately mention the PRC, stating that both countries: “share significant responsibilities for the peace and prosperity of the [Indo-Pacific] region” (Idem). Yet, Abe’s remarks about the PRC are detached from his words on cooperation within the FOIP strategy framework, and sound as if being said out of courtesy.

Why does Abe exclude the PRC from the list of countries with which Japan intends to cooperate on achieving the goals of the FOIP? After all, considering China’s geographical location, as well as its economic and military strength, it would seem natural that China would be allowed to join this club. There are many approaches that one could take to answer this question, however since the subject of the matter are relations between two countries, this falls into the competency of the International Relations (IR) discipline. Over time the IR discipline has developed a number of International Relations theories (IR theories) to answer questions, such as the one at the beginning of this paragraph. In other words, IR theories are interpretations of how relations between (amongst others) countries

¹ Full name: Association of Southeast Asian Nations. A group of ten countries from the Southeast Asian region, which cooperate with each other on economic and political matters.

² Throughout my essay I will use the official name of the country, so as to differentiate it from the Republic of China (ROC).

work, as well as why they work in a particular manner. In this essay I will argue that a particular IR theory, Realist Constructivism, is best suited to explain Japan's current foreign policy approach to the PRC in general, and within the framework of the FOIP strategy in particular. In this essay I will be answering the research question: Why is the Realist Constructivism theory of International Relations best suited for explaining Japan's foreign policy towards the PRC³ within the FOIP strategy framework?

In the following chapters I will first describe the theory of Realist Constructivism, how it came into existence. The name of the theory might give away the fact that it is some sort of combination between two already existing mainstream IR theories, namely Realism and Constructivism. As a matter of fact, it is. It is a synthesis of Realism and Constructivism in the Hegelian meaning of the word. After having explained which insight Realist Constructivism contributes to the field of IR theories, I will apply this IR theory to explain Japan's foreign policy towards the PRC within the context of the FOIP strategy. As I will demonstrate, there are two reasons that explain Japan's foreign policy towards the PRC. Namely, a mix between a power struggle and different value patterns. Both are results of specific historical developments since the mid-20th century between the two countries, and the outcome has formed Japan's view of the PRC. Before proceeding to the chapters on IR theory and on political relations between Japan and the PRC, I will first explain my methodology, as well as the type of sources that I will use. Afterwards will follow a brief literature review where I will look at how scholars have explained other examples of Japan-PRC political relations employing other approaches.

I will conclude my essay by briefly summarizing my methodological approach, after which I will recite why the theory of Realist Constructivism can give the most satisfactory answer to my research question compared to other IR theories, which I have mentioned in the chapter on IR theory. To achieve this, I will briefly mention the necessary historical context and what role the difference in norms and values plays in all of this. At the very end I will give a brief outlook on further possible applications of this theory in the study of

³ Full name: People's Republic of China.

International Relations in general, and political relations between Japan and the PRC⁴ in particular.

Methodological Approach: Critical Discourse Analysis

The question of what is the most suitable methodological approach in my essay is undoubtedly linked to the type of sources that I will use to base my analysis on. Explaining my theoretical approach will rely on analyzing a number of key publications on Realism, Constructivism and Realist Constructivism. In my chapter on Japan-PRC relations in the within the broader historical context I will make use of secondary sources, while I will base my analysis of the Japan-PRC relations in the context of the FOIP strategy on primary sources. They will consist of official government documents, such as speeches of leading political figures of Japan, in conjunction with diplomatic bluebooks and white papers. The latter two types of sources are official foreign policy documents produced by policy makers within Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The type of source material that I have chosen already substantially narrows down the amount of methods which I can use. The method that I have decided to use for working with my sources is Critical Discourse Analysis. In this chapter I will analyze the key authors and texts of this methodological approach, the key points of this methodology, and how I will apply it in my analysis of Japan-PRC relations later on.

In their recently published book *Critical Discourse Analysis, Critical Studies and beyond*, linguists Theresa Catalano and Linda R. Waugh give a comprehensive overview of the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) discipline (Catalano and Waugh 2020). Catalano and Waugh amongst others dedicate a 'historical' chapter⁵ in which they analyze a number of earlier disciplines that have influenced what eventually became CDA. Proceeding chronologically, Catalano and Waugh start by analyzing ideas of the linguist John R. Firth, who according to the authors formulated a new perspective on how to study language (and discourse) during the interwar period. Social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski heavily influenced Firth's understanding of linguistics with his statement that language cannot be

⁴ From now on I will use the term "Japan-PRC relations" as a more compact way of defining this topic.

⁵ Chapter 2: Precursors to CDA and Important Foundational Concepts.

seen as something separate from its users. Instead, the two are deeply interconnected with one another. Accepting Malinowski's ideas on language, Firth formulated an approach whereby he would look at the socio-cultural meanings of sounds, words, sentences and other elements of language (Idem, 14-15).

In his 2008 book *Discourse and Context*, Teun van Dijk, a scholar whom Catalano and Waugh identify as one of the founders of the CDA discipline (Idem, 63) essentially gives a modern and a more comprehensive overview of the initial arguments made by Firth and Malinowski's. Van Dijk reiterates the claim that if the reader performing the analysis wants to get past a superficial understanding of discourse, or a (spoken) text, then apart from being a linguist (or perhaps not inasmuch as being one) the reader also has to be a specialist or at least a pundit in the topic which the reader is analyzing (Van Dijk 2008, 2-3). Why is having a deeper understanding of the subject important? This arises from the fact that once the reader starts putting his thoughts on paper, the reader (now turned author) will not simply *describe* a text, but will *explain* it (Idem, 4) through interpretation, which in turn requires expertise. Van Dijk demonstrates that there are in fact many different understandings of what the term 'context' of a discourse can imply, depending on the discipline (Idem, 5-15, multiple examples of what 'context' may constitute). In another work Van Dijk describes the themes which scholars comprising the CDA discipline prioritize when conducting research. The term 'critical' in the CDA abbreviation is in fact a reference to the Frankfurt School, which in turn means that CDA scholars focus on the social aspects of discourse, in particular how a party that formulates discourse is able to frame a topic in a particular way, thus gaining power over the thoughts of those on the receiving end, which is seen as unjust. In other words, research of CDA scholars is normative and is set to uncover and emancipate power structures within language (Van Dijk 2009, 69-70). This same thought is supported by other CDA scholars in the same work (Meyer and Wodak 2009, 4-5, Fairclough 2009, 170).

Last, but not least, it is worth mentioning the 2008 book by the CDA scholar Theo van Leeuwen *Discourse and Practice*, in particular the chapter where he analyzes four types of legitimation of actions or thoughts in human society. Van Leeuwen argues that there are four approaches on how the existence of a particular form of discourse is legitimized:

authorization⁶, moral evaluation, rationalization and by means of mythopoesis⁷ (Van Leeuwen 2008, 105-106). The two most relevant approaches for my analysis later in my essay are moral evaluation and rationalization, since the other two approaches rarely appear in the speeches and official documents, which I will analyze later on. The 'moral evaluation' approach is when the creators (and perhaps the participants too) of a particular discourse legitimize (elements of) it by appealing to a particular set of norms and values, which they themselves and perhaps the recipients of the discourse share. Often times, the 'moral evaluation' as Van Leeuwen calls it, is partially concealed and the conclusions may seem self-evident if not analyzed critically (Idem 109-110). The 'rationalization' on the other hand entails that a particular discourse is justified by comparing it to, or by intermixing it with another discourse, fact(s), statement(s) etc., which themselves have been scientifically proven. At the same time claims made in the discourse in question are generalized, so as to give these claims themselves a scientific and rational tone, making them sound more convincing. Often hiding behind the generalizations, appeals and so on, is some kind of moral implication (Idem, 113).

Firth, Van Dijk and Van Leeuwen each have made contributions to the CDA discipline, which are also relevant for my essay. Before explaining why, I find it important to note the following. The normative approach, which entails uncovering of power structures and more importantly, uncovering inequalities within power structures existing in discourse is a central theme for many CDA scholars. However, in my essay I will not search for these inequalities. The main purpose of this research method in my essay will be to critically analyze how top politicians and policymakers from Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs have formulated a particular type of discourse on policy towards the PRC in the context of the FOIP strategy. Having chosen a methodological approach for answering my research question I will now proceed with analyzing how scholars have adopted different theoretical frameworks for explaining Japan-PRC relations before proceeding to explaining my own theoretical approach.

⁶ When the creators of a discourse appeal to the authority of a custom, institution, law, person, or a tradition to justify their decisions (Idem, 106).

⁷ Legitimizing particular discourse through storytelling (Idem, 117).

Literature Review

Japan-PRC relations is a well-researched topic with a broad literature base in multiple languages and disciplines. IR Scholars have also explained various aspects of Japan-PRC relations in general, and the Japan's policy towards the PRC within the context of the FOIP strategy, applying various theoretical frameworks to justify their explanations and interpretations. In this chapter I will look at a selection of authors and their publications to analyze the different points of view on different aspects of the relations between the two countries.

Hidetaka Yoshimatsu explores different aspects of Japan's relations with other East Asian countries, mainly using the realist theory of IR as his basis. Yoshimatsu in particular makes use of this theory when he analyzes Japan's efforts on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region (2021, 119). Yoshimatsu also emphasizes how Japan's foreign policy had become value driven, and how constructivist IR theory can help explain the rise of such diplomacy. Yoshimatsu traces Japan's value driven diplomacy to the early post-war years, when Japan underwent a shift in values and started taking part in global institutions, which were liberal in nature. Yoshimatsu also cites the then Foreign Minister Taro Aso's 2006 speech (Idem, 39), which I will analyze later in this essay. In this essay however, I will demonstrate that the realist and constructivist theories of IR on their own are insufficient for giving an answer that is comprehensive enough to understand the complex interplay in the field of International Relations.

In his article Kei Koga analyzes the FOIP from a particularly, yet unrelated perspective. Koga argues that the FOIP strategy fits into the 'tactical hedging' concept, whereby Japan introduces an initiative, but keeps it vague enough, so as not to take a clear stance (2019, 289). Three aspects define the concept of tactical hedging and differentiate it from its counterpart 'conventional hedging'. Firstly, an initiative which is considered to have characteristics of tactical hedging has a short time span, emphasizing its temporality. The expected brief time span of such an initiative is short, because the actor which has announced the initiative is clearly not the strongest on the international arena, and is awaiting a change in political environment soon. This allows an actor to even be assertive and introduce initiatives firsthand, owing to the overall vague nature of the initiative. The

overall vagueness of the initiative allows an actor to further adjust the initiative, when more influential actors announce their plans. Despite the goals being ambiguous, a policy which is part of tactical hedging can indeed be a prelude to a wider strategy which could potentially be formulated in the near future (Idem, 290). Koga's theoretical approach distinctively resembles the realist theory of IR. As I will expand on this when talking about the theoretical in my essay, according to a realist theory of IR, relations between countries is inevitably a power struggle, and a country enacting a foreign policy based on a wait-and-see approach essentially waits for a 'stronger' country to make its move. Although I agree that Realism is plausible IR theory, as I will explain later, one IR theory is not sufficient for getting a comprehensive understanding of a development on the international arena.

Another scholar, Yuichi Hosoya, takes yet another approach in explaining what Japan's intentions are when it promotes the FOIP. Although Hosoya does not state this anywhere, in his article he actually employs elements of realist and liberalist theories of IR. Hosoya argues that with the FOIP strategy, Japan in fact is trying to promote cooperation with amongst others the PRC by trying to combine it with PRC's own Belt and Road Initiative (Hosoya 2019, 24). According to Hosoya however, Japan's initiative is initially doomed, because of the broader picture of the political situation in East Asia, which Japan cannot control. One is the standoff between the PRC and the US, which has been going on for the last few years. Japan is closer aligned to the US, which makes the PRC see Japan's FOIP (from which the PRC is excluded) as a threat (Idem, 25). Hosoya portrays Japan trying to adhere to principles which are characterized by the liberalist theory of IR, namely that with the correct institutions (in this case the regional strategies, such as the FOIP, or the BRI), the international society can avoid a power struggle between various nations. However, Hosoya demonstrates that in fact it is too naïve to consider such a possibility to be true, and that there *is* a power struggle going on between the PRC and the US. Japan is simply an involuntary bystander. Hosoya thus reproduces the classical realist narrative of Liberalism being too naïve and narrow to be able to understand international relations. While this is certainly an interesting approach, once again, I will argue later that a different theory of IR in fact give a more comprehensive explanation of international relations.

Scholars have also looked how internal and external factors play a role in defining a country's actions on the international arena. When speaking of internal factors, one type of

actor to consider are state actors, because they do not simply influence foreign policy, they are the ones who formulate the official position of Japan as a state. When it comes to analyzing the state actors, scholars often turn to specific government ministries (Bochorodycz, Socha and Zakowski, 2018). This is not without reason. Ministries are complex governmental structures which amongst others accumulate the will of various interest groups within the society. In the case of Japan some examples are: bureaucrats from other ministries, factions within the ministry in question, or high-ranking elected government officials such as the prime minister (Idem, 5-6). For several decades following the end of WWII the Ministry of International Trade and Industry and its successor, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) established in 2001 have enjoyed and continue to enjoy the ability to influence Japan's foreign policy through initiatives which they introduce. These initiatives are often related to trade and the establishment of economic relations with countries around the world, but can sometimes paradoxically be related to culture as with the case of the 'Cool Japan' policy (Seaton and Yamamura, 405-406). METI is thus an example of a ministry which formulates foreign policy and in this case, the soft power trajectory of Japan's foreign policy.

There are also non-state actors within Japan which influence foreign policy by amongst others the means of lobbying, as is the case with various agricultural organizations which for a long time had successfully lobbied for protectionist measures in their sector (Solis and Urata 2018, 107-108, Choi and Sejin 2017, 237-238). When in 2010 Japan's prime minister Naoto Kan announced that he wanted Japan to join the regional free trade agreement which was in development at the time, Kan and his successors took two and a half years to convince various agricultural groups that were worried about the potential loss in revenue which they would experience (Naoi and Urata 2013 326-327, 334).

Since foreign policy of a state is meant to amongst others inform the international community of the actions a state is intending to take, policymakers take the developments in and the state of the international community into account when formulating their policies. Just as on the domestic front, there are also state and non-state actors on the international arena which influence foreign policy. In addition, there may be domestic actors which have their own agenda on the international arena. In Japan's case, the geo-political standoff between its key ally United States and Japan's key trading partner, the People's Republic of

China, or the establishment of production bases by Japanese companies in PRC (Takahashi and Urata 2008) and other East Asian states, or the East Asian Financial Crisis in 1997 (Johnstone 1999) are examples of international developments which have influenced Japan's foreign policy. In fact, external factors as I will argue continue to play a key role in the transformation of Japan's foreign policy towards one independent of the US.

International Relations Theory: Realist Constructivism

From the moment the study of international relations became an official discipline in the wake of WWI, it has been accompanied by a number of IR theories. To this day, IR theories continue to play an important role in explaining how and why international relations function the way they do. A few theories have become mainstream and attempt to be all-encompassing, joined by an array of smaller ones, which are often tailored to explain a particular aspect, or development in international relations. Each of the theories has a set of assumptions, which according to that particular theory explain how international relations actually function. The purpose of this chapter is to create a theoretical structure for the following chapter in my essay by analyzing a particular IR theory, Realist Constructivism, coined by its author, J. Samuel Barkin. In this chapter I will depict the general picture of where Barkin took his inspirations from when devising his theory, why Realist Constructivism came into existence, the main points of this IR theory, and most importantly, how this theory can help explain Japan's motives for stance that it takes towards the PRC in its foreign policy within the framework of the FOIP in particular, and in the past decennia in general.

The IR theory of Realist Constructivism is a fairly recent development in the field of international relations. First coined and proposed by Barkin in 2003, this theory combines elements of two mainstream theories, namely (Classical) Realism and Constructivism. As Barkin stated in his 2003 article "Realist Constructivism", the realist constructivist theory of IR focuses on explaining the interplay between power structures and norms, more specifically, how each of the two elements influence each other in international relations (Barkin 2003, 337-338). This sentence certainly needs clarification, which will undoubtedly follow in this chapter. However, before proceeding to explain in detail what Realist Constructivism proposes, it is first important to briefly analyze the two theories, and see

what led Barkin to eventually create his own theory which grew out of Realism and Constructivism. Every section will consist of a summary and an analysis of the key arguments and principles of each of the two theories, with Barkin's criticism on aspects of each of the two theories. The last section will combine two elements: an analysis of what Barkin has to propose with his IR theory of Realist Constructivism, Barkin's approach will be useful in analyzing the recent developments in Japan's foreign policy towards China.

Classical Realism

In his article, Barkin appeals to Classical Realism, an IR theory, elements of which can be traced to as far back as Ancient Greece, although the modern equivalent rose to prominence shortly after the end of WWII (Dunne 2013, 60-61). Hans Morgenthau, a defining scholar of classical realist IR theory writes about six principles of classical realist IR theory, however in this essay I am mainly interested in the first three. The first principle states that objective laws of human nature define how international politics are conducted. The objectivity of these laws points to the fact that they are to an extent timeless, specifically meaning that the same laws that govern human interactions today, have been in essence the same in the past centuries (Morgenthau 1985, 4). Realism thus is about finding *the* mode of interaction inherent to human nature, defining it, and working with it. The second principle defines this mode, namely that international politics are inevitably about "[...] interest defined in terms of power." Politicians, the main actors in international politics, may base their actions on any number of reasons, however in essence, they all strive to achieve their interests, which Morgenthau defines as *power*. They do so, because it is part of human nature to strive for power (Idem, 5). The third principle states that although politicians from various time periods and cultures ultimately strive to exercise power, the definition of what constitutes *power* can vary depending on the "political and cultural environment" (Idem, 11). Morgenthau further expands on the third point, stating that power need not necessarily be defined by material capabilities, and that it can also stem from immaterial elements (Idem, 32).

Before moving on further, it is first important to briefly take a closer look at how Morgenthau defines *national power* and his concept of the *balance of power*, both of which are important for understanding how realist IR theory developed from Classical Realism to

Structural Realism. As mentioned earlier, according to Morgenthau, power can be both material and immaterial. In his book he devotes a chapter where he defines the factors that can lead to a state (and its representatives) in being able to exercise power on the international arena. A state's geography, its access to natural resources and its industrial capacity all play important roles. The ability to effectively manage the access to these the factors can influence a state's military preparedness, which Morgenthau considers to be the most important material factor. The degree of military preparedness is what gives (or does not give) a state leverage to enact desired foreign policies (Idem, 139). Morgenthau also talks about immaterial factors such as national character and national morale, which define the preparedness of a nation to face a potential crisis (including the ultimate crisis in the form of war), as well as how active a nation can be on the international arena (Idem, 146-147). The functioning of all of the previously mentioned factors depends on the quality of diplomacy and the quality of governance. Whether a nation will (or will not) be successful in coordinating the above-mentioned material and immaterial factors depends on the quality of a state's diplomacy and the goals that it formulates (Idem 160-161). It is the quality of government though that stands above everything. A clear understanding of what a state's material and immaterial capabilities are, formulating a foreign policy befitting these capabilities, mustering (popular) internal, as well as external support for a nation's actions are intrinsic to increasing its power (Idem, 162-163).

Structural Realism

Classical Realism bore fruit to a new subcategory within realist thought, namely Structural Realism. Structural Realism proposes a somewhat different explanation of what the ultimate goal of human nature is, and how this translates into the policies that states implement in the national and international spheres. Structural realists also argue that states in fact possess a narrower tool kit of how to achieve power superiority and how to exercise it. Works of two prominent structural realist scholars, namely Kenneth N. Waltz and John J. Mearshimer, best define the key points of this stream of Realism, while both being proponents of two different approaches to Structural Realism.

Waltz and Mearshimer view international politics in essentially the same way as classical realists such as Morgenthau did, namely that on the international arena states

eventually resort to attempting to gain as much power as they can. Waltz and Mearshimer however argue that acquiring power is in fact only a means, and that this move is guided by the desire for states to survive. Waltz looks at the ways how different levels of society are organized, with a particular emphasis on how society is organized on a state level. He then analyses how states function on the international arena. Within a state there exists a hierarchy, which ensures a clear division of labor within a state. This also means that within a state there is an actor who has the monopoly on power, thus ensuring collective security. Collective security allows other actors within the state to develop other skills, thus increasing the welfare of a state. The international arena on the other hand knows no arbiter which would stand above nations and ensure collective order and security, making this system anarchic, with each state deciding for itself how to safeguard its existence. Voluntarily or not, this leads to states initiating a competition for attaining enough power vis á vis each other in order to ensure an imaginary balance of power amongst each other, in order to survive (Weber 2020, 22-23). Waltz links the struggle for power among states with violence and war, which are inevitable in such a struggle. The most capable asset for achieving superiority, or at least a balance of power, is military prowess (Waltz 2010, 102-103).

Mearshimer's views on how states function are similar to that of Waltz. However, unlike Waltz, Mearshimer jumps immediately into analyzing the international arena by presenting a list of assumptions on how states interact in it. Assumptions such as the international order being anarchic, which leads to states deciding on their own how to ensure their own security in order to survive, or the assumption that military power is the primary asset for ensuring security clearly resonate with Waltz' ideas. Where Mearshimer differs from Waltz however, is that he assumes that a state is capable of attacking another state in order to ensure its own survival (Mearshimer 2001, 30-31). According to Waltz, states are essentially caught in an almost involuntary arms race, in order to ensure that no state will be willing to attack the other. Structural realists thus deviate from the ideas of classical realists, who take a broader approach to what constitutes power and whether states do in fact aim to attack each other.

Barkin focuses his criticism on structural criticism, voicing his discontent with the fact that scholars promoting this strand of Realism have convinced themselves that there is one particular way how relations among nations are shaped, namely that each state is fighting

for its survival through acquiring as much power as possible relative to other states. Such a limited vision of how relations among nations are conducted has amongst others led to the creation of a limited toolkit for defining the possibilities of what it is that nations need in order to increase their power (Barkin 2010, 123-124). Defining relations so narrowly leads neorealist scholars to either disregard cases that do not fit into their worldview as marginal, or it leads them to twisting their argumentation in such a manner so as to somehow fit into the worldview that in the end that case *is* about survival and attaining power (Idem, 126-127). On the other hand, Barkin considers that classical realists have a broader outlook on international relations, because although scholars like Morgenthau also argue that there is a prescribed end goal in all human interactions, namely the achievement of power, what constitutes power is open to interpretation, and depends on the circumstances of the particular *zeitgeist*⁸ (Idem, 125-126). Barkin thus does not consider realist IR theory to be sufficient for explaining how international relations function. However, he does leave a door open for realist IR theory when he analyses that what classical realists consider as constituting power can be different depending on the historical era, meaning that there is no one answer to how international relations are structured (Idem 135-136).

Constructivism

Constructivist IR theory distinguishes its approach to international relations primarily in relations to Structural Realism. Positivist international relations theories such as Structural Realism propose that there is only one pattern of how international relations function. The pattern remains the same, because this pattern is deducted from human nature, which always has one goal in mind. Constructivist scholars argue that relations between various societies (represented by states) depend on how these societies interact with each other at a given moment. In this section I will focus on the arguments of a prominent constructivist scholar Alexander Wendt, in order to briefly explain the main point of constructivist IR theory of international relations. At the end I will briefly explain why Barkin thinks that Constructivism on its own cannot build a link with realist IR theory, a link that Barkin argues to be a necessary one.

⁸ A Hegelian term used in philosophy and historiography to define the exclusive historic circumstances of a particular timeframe. The literal translation of this word is: "spirit of the time."

Constructivist scholars agree with realist scholars that states play a central role in international politics, and they also agree that what states value the most is their own survival however, according to constructivists, in particular Alexander Wendt, every state decides (consciously or unconsciously) for itself whether it wants to take a more confrontational or cooperative approach with one, or several other states (Weber 2020, 64). Like realists, who argue that states are always in a struggle for power and influence, and like liberalists, who argue that states are always willing to cooperate with each other (Richmond 2020, 31, 33), Wendt agrees that each state has its own interests, however the key difference with the Realism is that according to constructivists, past experiences shape the identity of a state, shape its norms and values, and thus the way it interacts with other states at present. Present experiences in turn are likely to have an effect on the way a state will interact with others in the future. Thus, every state decides for itself how it (re)starts its relations with other states. Having said this, Wendt argues that a state may change its mode with interaction with other nations at any given point in time (Weber 2020, 66-69).

Thus, constructivists do not offer an entirely original perspective for explaining how political relations between states function. As we have seen, both classical realist and neorealist scholars devote much more time analyzing what constitutes power and how to measure it. Instead, constructivists focus on the process of why a state interacts with others in a particular manner, working with categories such as culture, norms and values and so on. By doing so, constructivists attempt at building a bridge between Realism and Liberalism by arguing that relations between two societies are (re)shaped by their experiences with each other (Weber 2020, 66). However, according to Barkin, this is where things go wrong. Although constructivists claim that they are open to analyzing any number of reasons why state interact with others, constructivist scholars too often and uncritically presuppose that states in fact base their actions on liberal norms and values (Barkin 2010, 140-141). This bias leads scholars to search in how far states adhere to liberal norms and values, instead of inductively analyzing which norms and values *actually* motivate states to build particular relations. If constructivists act in this way (which they do), then they are essentially no different from structural realists. Instead of trying to seek objective results through an inductive method, constructivists presuppose a particular worldview and try finding evidence to support it (Idem, 143). There is however a greater reason for the constructivists'

failure. Barkin argues that the very essence of how international relations theories are composed is what generates antagonism between IR scholars. In the next section I will summarize Barkin's arguments on these two points, after which I will analyze how Barkin proposes a new way of looking at international relations theories.

Barkin's Realist Constructivism

Barkin brings two elements to the table. First of all, he proposes to clearly delineate the borders of the different IR theories, and instead of making each IR theory try to encompass as many ideas as possible, leave only the core concepts of each theory behind. In return for scaling down each theory, and avoiding theories becoming all-encompassing in a process that he calls "theory imperialism", Barkin proposes scholars to borrow elements of different IR theories which can best answer a particular phenomenon. Second of all, Barkin proposes scholars to use realist and constructivist theories side by side as they both can in fact complement each other.

Barkin's IR theory of Realist Constructivism arises from what he sees as a deadlock between realist and constructivist scholars, whereby each side disregards the arguments of the other, and claims that only their theory of how international relations function is true and valid. Right from his first publication, Barkin has consecutively argued that despite the deadlock, the two theories are in fact compatible and are not mutually exclusive (Barkin 2003, 326). He concludes that many IR scholars have come to work in a system where theories are seen as paradigms, instead of seeing them as core concepts. The former essentially means that scholars are not open to analyzing international relations through the lens of any IR theory other than their own, and instead try to expand or reinterpret the definition of their own theory, in order to make it compatible with a phenomenon which the IR theory at first cannot explain. The process of expanding the definition of the IR theory, or reinterpreting the theory not only leads to scholars losing sight of what the theory stood for as is the case with structural realists (Barkin 2010, 157). Or, as is the case with Constructivism, where the definition of this IR theory thinning out to the extent that it becomes too vague (Idem, 144).

Instead, Barkin proposes that IR theories can be seen as core concepts. This approach implies two things. On the one hand, scholars should let go of the thought that the entire

field of international relations can be defined through the lens of one IR theory, and instead accept that each theory specializes on a particular aspect of international relations, thus has its limitations. The very fact that each IR theory looks at international relations from a specific lens already shows that it cannot possibly explain every phenomenon. Realist theory is much more focused on the political aspect of international relations, whereas constructivist theory analyzes international relations from a social perspective (Idem, 156, 158). On the other hand, by accepting that one theory cannot explain everything, scholars can instead be more willing to make use of multiple IR theories if necessary, and answer a particular question by using IR theories which are best suited for the task (Idem, 163-164). Accepting this point leads to Barkin proposing his concept of Realist Constructivism.

With all of the above mentioned in mind, Barkin proposes to use Realism and Constructivism in combination with each other when analyzing international relations, because although the two theories do look at international relations somewhat differently, they are nevertheless compatible. As the section on Classical Realism has shown, there is an ultimate goal that humanity strives which is interest (expressed in power), however other than that there is a freedom of interpretation of what power constitutes and how to achieve it. Every case thus should be analyzed separately due to the circumstances which are different every time. Constructivism in its core is even more inductive than Classical Realism when arguing that the particular mode of interaction among societies at a given moment in time will define whether it will perhaps be a race for power, or something else. Thus, as Barkin puts it, an inductive approach towards each case, analyzing the norms and values of a society at a particular moment in time (in order to understand what power constitutes, or what approach to international relations in general is the most relevant) and awareness of the role of historical developments in general is what makes these compatible (Idem, 167).

Because both theories are compatible, each has two things that they can specifically offer to each other. Realist theory can explain to constructivist scholars how power influences the norms and values of a society. Conversely, constructivist theory with its insights on norms and values can better explain which norms and values (and the historical developments that accompany them) can lead to societies choosing for power-based relations (Barkin 2003, 337-338, idem 2010, 169, 171). The second element that each IR theory can offer to the other is paying closer attention to what Barkin labels as “moral

relativism". In other words, when attempting to translate theoretical approach into something more specific such as policy, realist theory reminds constructivists that any set of norms and values should be looked at critically, and that no matter the goodwill, these norms and values can be seen by other parties (primarily) as an element of power politics (Barkin 2010, 170). Constructivism on the other hand shows that the quest for power is not necessarily a quest for survival, compared to how structural realists view it, and that one has to look more closely to the other options of how the international relations between states actually work (Idem, 172).

Conclusion

In this chapter I have taken a closer look at J. Samuel Barkin's concept of Realist Constructivism, which in essence is a proposal for scholars in the field of international relations to be more open towards using other IR theories other than their own in order to understand how international relations work. As Barkin notes it, the discipline of international relations today is polarized, with scholars that adhere to a specific IR theory doing everything to make their theory all-encompassing. This in turn leads to scholars coming up with new strands of the theory which become ever less connected with what the theory initially proposed. Both of the above mentioned theories have suffered from this development in their respective ways. Realism, which started out as a theory with a more inductive approach to what constitutes power, evolved into having a more deductive approach, namely the will for states to survive, which led to over-prioritizing this approach while discarding others. This led to a narrower perception of reality by focusing on only the phenomena that it *could* answer. Constructivism ended up in a similar place, although the details of its path have been somewhat different compared to Realism. By taking for granted that liberal norms and values are superior to others despite stating initially to look at all norms and values equally, constructivist scholars have narrowed down their perceptions of how international relations function.

Barkin proposes a solution by scaling down constructivist and realist IR theories to "core concepts", having them consist of only the perceptions that they had at the respective beginnings of their paths as theories. Barkin also does not see a problem in having IR scholars use different IR theories when they encounter a phenomenon which they cannot

explain with the basic perceptions of the theory which they most favor. This way Barkin arrives at his concept of Realist Constructivism in order to demonstrate that one IR theory can actually compliment the other. In the context of Barkin's theory, constructivist theory can help demonstrate that the concept of power can have different meanings depending on the context and the *zeitgeist*, whereas realist theory can help understand how power structures influence norms and values of a particular society, and vice versa. In the next chapter I will use Barkin's IR theory to demonstrate that a more complex approach is required in order to understand the changes in Japan's foreign policy towards China in the past decades. I will demonstrate in the following chapters that although many scholars (implicitly) are tempted to view developments in this field from the perspective of a specific IR theory, I will illustrate that one can get the most out by combining ideas of realist and constructivist theories of IR when analyzing this topic.

Realist Constructivism in Practice: Historical Background and an Analysis of the FOIP Strategy

Having explained the theoretical framework, I will implement it in this chapter to demonstrate that relations between Japan⁹ and China are more complex than just being purely confrontational, or cooperative. Specific historical developments have shaped relations into what they are today, and a particular value pattern shared by Japan's politicians and policy makers has influenced the type of foreign policy that Japan implements in the context of the FOIP strategy. The first part of this chapter will provide the context needed to understand the role, which the FOIP plays in current relations between China and Japan, as well as demonstrating key events that have shaped Japan's thinking towards the PRC. The second part of the chapter will be dedicated to analyzing the nature of the FOIP strategy, as Japan's government formulates it. Lastly, I will explain how Barkin's IR theory of Realist Constructivism explains how norms and values shared by Japan have shaped its foreign policy on the PRC in the context of the FOIP strategy.

⁹ It is important to note here that from now on I will use the names of the countries instead of mentioning a particular group, or person, or institution from that country for consistency's sake. In the end, every politician, policymaker, group of people make up the larger society, represented by the country's name.

WWII and Early Post-War Years

Sino-Japanese relations became ever more confrontational since the second part of the 19th century, with both countries being directly at war with each other twice, and Japan occupying and annexing, which earlier belonged to China (Gordon 2003, 118, 204). However, three developments formed the basis of relations between the two countries in the following decades: Japan's occupation by Allied Forces (primarily by the United States), the legacy of the Second Sino-Japanese War, and the outcome of the Chinese Civil War (Kokubun et al. 2017, 32). These three developments would serve as a background for the relations between the two countries in the Cold War period, and up to this day. In turn, some of the events that took place during the (late) Cold War period and in the immediate years following the end of the Cold War continue to resonate in the relations between the two countries to this day.

Furthermore, during the closing phase of the Allied Occupation of Japan, the prime minister of Japan at the time Yoshide Shigeru signed the Security Treaty between the United States and Japan in 1951, leaving the military security of Japan in the hands of the United States (Kokubun et al. 2017, 38). This move, and the effect of the Allied Occupation of Japan in general led Japan to becoming a member of the "Western bloc" (as opposed to the "Eastern bloc) nations¹⁰. By signing the treaty and by supporting American forces in the Korean War and onwards (even if Japan was coerced into such actions) Japan took a clear stance in the unfolding Cold War (Hook et al. 2011, 166). The occupation of Japan by Allied Forces came as a result of its defeat by the Allied Forces in the Pacific War (1941-45), however while at war with the Allies, Japan had also been waging a war with China, which it had started in 1937¹¹ (Cribb and Wilson 2017, 82-83). Japan led this war under the guise of Pan-Asianism, an idea of uniting East Asia politically and economically under Japan's leadership (Saaler and Szpilman 2017, 38-39). What this turned out to be in practice was an

¹⁰ The Korean War (1950-53) broke out while Japan was still under Allied Occupation. Japan's territories, in particular the Ryukyu Islands stationed U.S. troops, which in turn took part in the Korean War (Morris-Suzuki 2018, 113-114). At the same time, Japan's economy profited from maintaining and manufacturing material for United States' during and after the Korean War (Gordon 2003, 241).

¹¹ Japan commenced a full-scale war against China in 1937. However, Japan's Kwantung army had already occupied the Chinese province of Manchuria in 1932, and there were prior instances of Japan occupying, or annexing Chinese territory.

eight-year-long conflict that spanned through the vast territories of China, and which carried away the lives of countless soldiers and civilians.

Lastly, China's stance towards Sino-Japanese relations were also shaped by the outcome of the power struggle between the Kuomintang (KMT) and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Both parties had been in conflict with each other since 1926 to become the leading force in China. After several years of fighting, the CCP with Mao Zedong as its head emerged as the victor, conquering the entirety of continental China¹², and proclaiming the People's Republic of China in late 1949 (Lary 2007, 175). Meanwhile, the remnants of the KMT, still under the leadership of Chiang Kai-Shek, were forced to flee to the island of Taiwan off the coast of mainland China, where they proclaimed that they would continue the Republican cause (Singh 2010, 44). There were now two Chinese governments. On one hand was the KMT government that albeit controlled only a fraction of China's territory nevertheless enjoyed recognition by the majority of the world (including Japan) as the legitimate Chinese government. On the other hand, there was the CCP government, which controlled all of mainland China, but enjoyed recognition as the legitimate Chinese government only by the Soviet Union and its satellites. With all of the newly formed actors in place, the stage was set for the post-war relations between Japan and the PRC.

Key Developments during the Cold War

In the immediate post-war period, the earlier non-existent Sino-Japanese started taking a new shape once trade between the two countries became possible once again. Owing the animosity that existed between the two countries as a result of Japan's invasion of China, reestablishing political ties was not an option at the time. Trade was thus the way out. One of the measures that the Allied occupational authorities took to reinvigorate Japan's economy was permitting Japan in 1947 to restart its foreign trade, including with mainland China (Kokubun et al. 2017, 28). Thus, even before the hot phase of the Chinese Civil War ended in 1950, individual members of the Japanese parliament (the Diet), who were sympathetic to the PRC were quick to establish private trade associations together with their CCP counterparts. A particular example is the Japan-China Trade Promotion

¹² The CCP managed to restore the borders almost as they were in the final years of the Qing Dynasty. Among the territories, that the CCP-led armies did not restore was the Outer Mongolian region, which was seceded to the Mongolian People's Republic, a Soviet satellite state.

Association (JCPTA), established in May of 1949. Together with their counterparts in the CCP, the aforementioned Diet members would organize unofficial barter trade treaties via the JCPTA throughout the 1950s and 1960s, with each treaty commonly lasting for about a year and having a cap in United States Dollars. The cap would indicate the volume of trade permitted under a specific treaty. As years went on, the trade volumes would steadily increase, which however did not alter the fact that the overall nature of this kind of trade remained small-scale (Idem, 43-45).

The 1970s brought about a radical change to the modus operandi. US President Richard Nixon's public announcement in May of 1971 of his intention to visit the PRC in the near future, and the United Nations (UN) resolution recognizing the PRC as the legitimate representative of China (UN Resolution 2758, 2022) signaled to Japanese officials that the path to official relations between the two countries was now open. Japan followed a similar path to many other countries (chiefly among them the United States) that wanted to continue maintaining an unofficial presence in Taiwan following the above-mentioned switch. Thus, in the 1972 Japan-China Joint Communique Japan recognized the PRC as the sole legitimate Chinese government, but implied that PRC's legal sovereignty extended only as far as the territories under its control. The two countries established formal relations (Togo 2005, 128-131).

The start of formal relations between the PRC soon reflected on the economic situation between the two countries. Shortly after signing the joint communique, both countries established a general trade agreement, as well as agreements on cooperation in industries such as fishing and air transport (Kokubun et al. 2017, 98). When Mao Zedong passed away in 1976, Deng Xiaoping, who eventually succeeded Mao took the decision to improve PRC's economic situation through partial economic liberalization. This amongst others meant economic cooperation with other countries. A combination of Japan being economically the most developed country in the region at the time, and the improving political ties following the establishment of formal relations between Japan and the PRC, created favorable conditions for cooperation. So, in 1979, the decision was made to accept 'Official Development Assistance' (ODA), Japanese government loans and grants for specific infrastructural projects in China (Togo 2005, 137-138). As mentioned earlier, the share of Japan's economic cooperation with the PRC had been growing for several years by that time.

Japan was in favor of granting ODA to the PRC, since its companies could now profit from having a physical presence in the PRC while building up its infrastructure (Drifte 2006, 99). The 1980s in general were a decade of growing relations despite a few short-lived upheavals (Glenn et al. 2011, 170).

Relations in the Post-Cold War Period

The time around the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the 1990s marked in both countries a generational change within the Chinese and Japanese societies. This change did not go unnoticed among the ranks of politicians and lawmakers either. Those, who in one way or the other participated in WWII gradually retired and were succeeded by a post-war generation (Yahuda 2013, 34). Although this change was gradual, the changes became evident once the two countries were for the first time seriously at odds with each other after a period of building relations, the change. The first big hit to the political relations came with Japan's reaction on PRC managing of the 1989 Tiananmen Square Protests. Throughout the 1980's, Japan (like other Western countries) hope that the PRC would eventually democratize and accept liberal values, however PRC's brutal crackdown on the protest movement shattered all of Japan's hopes for such changes. Japan condemned PRC's actions, and to make its point clear, it froze negotiations on the upcoming ODA financial package (Drifte 2006, 95). Soon however, Japan started reverting its stance and eventually became the first country of the Western Bloc to lift any sanctions that it had imposed in the wake of the Tiananmen Square crackdown (Chung 2014, 25-26).

Perhaps this move could serve as a means to start repairing relations between the two countries, however only a few years later both countries stood once again opposite each other in the 1995-96 Taiwan Strait Crisis. Japan was startled when the PRC carried out missile tests and military exercises in the proximity of ROC-controlled islands. Ever since the end of the active phase of the Chinese Civil War, both the PRC and the ROC eventually stopped using their military in any way as a means to solve the long-standing dispute among them on the right of existence of one another. However, after several decades, this means once again became reality. Even after Japan cut all formal ties with the ROC, the two countries continued to have favorable relations, which only increased with the democratization process of the ROC's government. Japan thus saw a country with which it

had favorable relations threatened. In addition to issuing threats to the ROC, the PRC voiced its claims to Japan over the Senkaku Islands¹³ (Togo 2005, 151-152). The first time the PRC voiced its claims of the Senkaku Islands being its territory was in 1972 however, back then they were political in nature. Now, in combination with the military exercises, these claims appeared in a new light and Japan felt militarily threatened (Tseng 2015, 12, 15).

At the turn of the century, Japan started questioning the need for continuing its ODA to the PRC due to the rapid growth of its economy throughout the 1990's. The rapid growth meant that the PRC government was now itself able to fund infrastructural projects (Arase 2006, 93). Throughout the 1990s Japan already had decided to end its ODA to several other countries in East Asia for the same reason (Drifte 2006, 101), however in the PRC's case discussions on ending ODA were seen as a part of growing tensions at the time between the two countries. An absolute majority of Japan's ODA to China ended in 2008 (Wan 2015, 189). Other long-standing issues between the two countries now too got a new interpretation. Already in the 1980s, the PRC voiced its protest on two other topics. Firstly, the PRC protested against the then Prime Minister Yasuhiro making an official visit to the Yasukuni shrine, where are a number of the most notorious Japanese war criminals are commemorated.

Secondly, the PRC protested a decision of a screening commission to soften the phrasing in high-school textbooks describing Japan's actions during the Second Sino-Japanese War (Tanaka 2017, 136-138). Owing to the generally improving relations between the two countries, tensions over these topics were short-lived at the time. However, when in the early 2000s the PRC protested against yet another history textbook controversy and a formal visit to the Yasukuni shrine by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, this instead contributed to the already strained relations (Kokubun 2021, 182, Tanaka 2017, 254-255). More recently, tension arose around the Senkaku Islands once again in 2010 when Japan's coast guard vessels collided with a Chinese fishing boat that had entered the surrounding waters without permission. The crew of the Chinese ship was interned for several weeks (Wan 2015, 73). As mentioned earlier, the PRC claims these islands to be part of its territory, albeit they are Japanese-administered, thus according to the PRC the coast guard vessels

¹³ The PRC refers to them as the Diaoyu Islands.

had no right to engage the fishing boats. For Japan, the actions of the fishing boats were none other than illegal trespassing of its waters (Kokubun et al. 2017, 180).

On the economic front, both countries jointly announced the commencement of negotiations on a large-scale free trade agreement (FTA). Negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) started in 2013 (Yoshimatsu 2021, 60), and were finally concluded in late 2020, with the FTA coming into effect on January 1, 2022 (ASEAN 2022). One of the key goals of any FTA is to remove trade barriers, with tariff removal being one of the prime targets, and requires a high level of cooperation among the parties agreeing to such a decision. Removing tariffs on certain categories of products can be a sensitive matter, as foreign producers could outcompete local manufacturers in a certain industry, whereas this industry might be crucial to a country's economy (Damuri 2016, 114-115).

The Path to the FOIP and its Contents

Although Prime Minister Abe announced the FOIP strategy¹⁴ in its current iteration in a speech to the Diet in 2018, this speech was the culmination of a chain of events, the start of which traces back to his first tenure as a prime minister. During Abe's first term in 2006-07, Abe and the then Foreign Minister Taro Aso formulated the basic outline of the future foreign policy in two separate speeches that they gave. In his foreign policy speech, Aso spoke of the concepts "Value Oriented Diplomacy" and the "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity" (hereafter "the Arc"). A closer look at the two concepts reveals their interconnectedness, with the former constituting the principles of Japan's foreign policy and the latter constituting the scope. In summary, Aso spoke of wanting to work together with the EU and NATO on promoting "universal values" such as democracy, freedom, human rights and peace among a vast array of countries, spanning from Southeast Asia to the Caucasus, to Eastern Europe (Aso, "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity").

What makes this speech particularly notable is the PRC not being included in such an ambitious plan. Aso only makes two brief remarks about the PRC: that Japan's foreign policy in general aims to strengthen relations with many countries, including the PRC, and a brief summary of trade volumes between the two countries. The PRC is also absent from Aso's list

¹⁴ The name of the policy underwent several changes until it reached its final iteration.

of “friendly nations” with which Japan intended to work together promoting the Arc, nor does it figure even as a target of this policy (Aso, Idem). It is not surprising to see how clearly Aso omits any mention of political cooperation with the PRC on the Arc considering the uneasy relationship between the two countries during the 2000s described in the first section. Despite this, Aso’s speech was moderate considering how rhetoric would change in the coming years, as later speeches will demonstrate. Content wise, Abe’s speech to the Indian Parliament in 2007 did not add anything new to Aso’s speech however, Abe described the policy in his own way, namely that it would promote openness, transparency and the free flow of amongst others goods and knowledge freely between the Indian and Pacific Oceans (Abe, “Confluence of the Two Seas”). This description would serve as the basis of the title of the future policy.

It is also important to emphasize that during all of the speeches given by Japanese government officials and in all of the documents published by Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) on the FOIP, Japan’s officials emphasize the inclusiveness of this policy, instead of stating whom it opposes. The speeches that I analyze in this section were either given during a visit to a particular country, or at a regional forum aiming a specific set of countries. The next mention of what would become the FOIP occurs during Prime Minister Abe’s speech given at the Sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development in 2016 already during his second term. In it, Abe named the future policy: “confluence of the Pacific and Indian Oceans” and once again, spoke of key concepts such as “freedom” and “the rule of law” while addressing representatives of African countries (Abe, Address at the Opening Session of TICAD VI). This speech holds far less value compared to other ones, since Abe mentions this initiative only briefly, and does not go into any detail of how Japan plans to achieve the above-mentioned values however, this speech shows that Japan was still on track with formulating the upcoming policy.

Abe officially announced the FOIP strategy in its current form in a speech to the Diet in early 2018 as I have mentioned in the introduction. The scope of the “Free and Open Indo-Pacific” policy is a selection of countries in Africa, Asia and Oceania with a coastline in the Bay of Bengal, South China Sea and the broader Indian or Pacific Oceans (Towards FOIP 2019, 4). The policy focuses on six aspects: maritime security, infrastructure projects, environmental protection, human resource development, energy security and the

development of legal systems (Idem). The most relevant aspect here is maritime security. Considering Abe's harsh rhetoric in his essay, one can hardly expect any cooperation between the two countries and indeed, there is no mention of any cooperation between Japan and the PRC on this aspect. Instead, Japan's main partner is the United States (Idem, 9). In fact, cooperation with other countries (even outside the region) remains a key aspect of this policy, in particular on the topic of maritime security. Japan especially emphasizes the fact that countries like U.S., Australia, India and countries in Europe and Southeast Asia now cooperate with Japan on either achieving maritime security, or assist in economic projects (Japan's Foreign Policy by Region 2021, 31, Japan's Effort for a FOIP 2021, 4-5).

Current Japan-PRC Relations through the lens of Realist Constructivism

In the speeches given by Abe and Aso, as well as in the Diplomatic Bluebook and in the White Papers about the FOIP, one can always find a sentence, which contains a brief summary of the values that Japan cherishes. For example, in his 2018 FOIP speech to the Diet, Abe names the following: "[...] fundamental values such as freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law" (Abe, Policy Speech to the 196th Session of the Diet). The same or similar words appear elsewhere too in all other speeches and documents that have appeared in this paper (e.g. Aso, "Arc of Freedom and Prosperity", Towards FOIP 2019, 5). At the same time, the authors of the same Diplomatic Bluebook that openly boasts about the success of the FOIP strategy, openly voice why Japan is reluctant to cooperate with the PRC on this initiative. By stating that the PRC undertakes "unilateral actions to change the status quo in the East China Sea and South China Sea," Japan questions whether the PRC will bypass bilateral and international agreements repeatedly whenever it sees fit, if it has already done so in the East China Sea around the Senkaku Islands.

The authors conclude that the PRC should contribute to an "international order based on the rule of law" (Japan's Foreign Policy by Region 2021, 58). It is not difficult to make a link between these words and Japan cooperating on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific with many nations, except for with the PRC. To make their point clear, the authors of the document give a brief account of the Senkaku Islands the developments of the dispute at the time of publishing, and what Japan's position is on this dispute. Namely, that the Senkaku Islands are recognized as Japan's territory under international law, the PRC first laid

claim on these islands long after this recognition, and that PRC tries to treat these islands by sending its Coast Guard vessels into the islands' waters (*Idem*, 62-63).

The fact that the PRC is excluded from Japan's main foreign policy initiative in East and Southeast Asia clearly indicates that relations between Japan and the PRC are based on one country (Japan) trying to acquire more power in relation to the other (the PRC). In the case of this policy, power constitutes a mix of both material and immaterial aspects. The material aspects are the vast array of (economic) infrastructure and maritime security projects, "human resource development" initiatives and so on, all of which Japan and countries, which it considers its allies, carry out (*Towards FOIP 2019*). Interpreting Hans Morgenthau's words more broadly, Japan's access to a vast geographic zone (from East Asia to the East African coast), as well as expanding its industrial capacity by having recipient nations use the new infrastructure for amongst others trading with Japan, increases Japan's power vis-a-vis the PRC. The maritime security aspect is especially important, since it involves sending patrol vessels into different parts of the Indo-Pacific (including the South China Sea), which is a direct increase of Japan's (potential) military capacity. Of course, Article 9 of Japan's Constitution renounces the use of any type of "war potential" to achieve its international goals, so one cannot possibly speak of a true military buildup from Japan's side, as a means to achieve power. This is why Japan's officials so clearly indicate the values that drive foreign policy initiatives, such as the FOIP, as well as the countries that Japan chooses to cooperate with (or not). Japan implies that PRC's "unilateral actions" around the Senkaku Islands conflict with its value of the rule of law, thus the PRC is excluded from the FOIP. Values, such as those mentioned by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in his 2018 speech are thus a tool in a broader power struggle.

The first section of this chapter has shown that apart from a short time span, relations between Japan and the different governments representing China have been uneasy from at least the start of the 1930's. At one point in time, Japan's imperialism put any relations to a full stop, while being part of opposing blocs during the Cold War hindered establishing official relations. However, once official relations between mainland China (represented by the PRC) and Japan were established, a combination of Japan's disappointment of the PRC not accepting "universal values" (as FM Taro Aso put it), and a mounting amounts of "incidents" on both sides have eventually have soured relations

between the two countries. Although there is acknowledgement for the close economic ties, they do not seem to improve the situation as a whole. Once having read the historical developments, the current mode of the relations between the two countries only seems natural, but how does it work?

In his theory, Barkin states that the constructivist aspect can help one understand what values and norms create the specific power-based relations that exist between societies. As the historical events imply, apart from a short period of time immediately after WWII when each country was too busy with its internal strives, the two countries being each other's (maritime) neighbors have continuously tried to influence one another. Japan makes it clear that it adheres to "universal values", which consist of amongst others freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. According to Japan, because the PRC does not always want to align itself with its values, and instead at times attempts to assert its values, the two countries enter a power struggle as a result of different norms.

Conclusion

In this essay I have focused on answering the research question: Why is the Realist Constructivism theory of International Relations best suited for explaining Japan's foreign policy towards the PRC within the FOIP strategy framework? Before proceeding to answer this question, I first explained the methodological approach for my essay. The Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach is best explained by analyzing a number of key CDA, which have contributed to forming the basis of this methodological approach in the topics that each of them covered in their works. In particular, I analyzed the works of CDA scholars John R. Firth, Teun van Dijk, and Theo van Leeuwen. All of these scholars have also been mentioned in Theresa Catalano's and Linda R. Waugh's defining overview of this methodological discipline.

Firth was one of the very first CDA scholars, and thus his principles of analyzing socio-cultural meanings of sounds, words, sentences and other elements of language constitute the basis of this discipline. Van Dijk continues Firth's line of thought by arguing that having a comprehensive understanding of a topic is important if one wants to give a qualified interpretation of what one has analyzed and produced. In addition, Van Dijk defined what the word 'critical' in the methodology's name adds to the discipline. Namely, how power

relations and hierarchies are transmitted through language. Van Leeuwen dives into explaining how discourse is legitimized by its authors, stating four approaches: through authorization, moral evaluation, rationalization, and mythopoesis. The nature of my sources means that moral evaluation and rationalization are the relevant approaches in my essay. Later on I use both of these approaches to demonstrate the morally loaded language used by the MOFA to justify its policy on the PRC in a broader sense, and in the context of the FOIP in particular.

The topic of Japan-PRC has been extensively researched, and so before I proceeded to define my theoretical framework, I first briefly overviewed how scholars approached various aspects of Japan-PRC (political) relations by employing other theories and other perspectives. Hidetaka Yoshimatsu work makes use of realist and constructivist theories of IR separately to explain Japan's efforts on maritime security in the Indo-Pacific region. Koga's 'tactical hedging' approach is reminiscent of the realist theory of IR, because a country enacts a foreign policy based on a wait-and-see approach, and essentially waits for a 'stronger' country to make its move. Hosoya reproduces the classical realist narrative of Liberalism being too naïve and narrow to be able to understand international relations. Finally, it is possible to look at the specific internal actors that influence Japan's foreign policy. Various lobbying groups, such as farmers, which are an important source of votes for Japan's biggest political party, can demand that Japan takes a specific policy. Also, at

different points in time, various ministries and the bureaucrats that work there have had influenced how policy is made.

Having demonstrated other possible approaches at the topic of Japan-PRC (political) relations, including looking at how scholars have approached the topic of Japan-PRC relations based on how the two countries interact in the context of the FOIP strategy, the next thing to do was explaining the IR theory of Realist Constructivism: what it consists of, its place among other IR theories, and why I have chosen this IR theory over others to explain my research question. Samuel J. Barkin, the author of this IR theory first proposed it in 2003. Barkin is critical of the deadlock between IR scholars belonging to adherents of a realist IR theory and a constructivist IR theory. In particular, Barkin is critical of the fact that each side considers only its own view of IR as legit, and that this disagreement has led to each IR theory either losing touch with its core principals, as the case of Structural Realism

demonstrates. On the other hand, the case with Constructivism demonstrates how a theory's definition can thin out to the point when one can hardly distinguish whether something is part of that theory, or not. Instead, Barkin argues that the two theories *can* work side by side. Barkin analyzes the founding concepts of both theories, and offers a synthesis of the two theories. In other words, each of the theories could adopt a core assumption of the other to better take into account the various complex developments and phenomena that (can) play a role in International Relations. Realist theory can explain to constructivist scholars how power influences the norms and values of a society. Conversely, constructivist theory with its insights on norms and values can better explain which norms and values (and the historical developments that accompany them) can lead to societies choosing for power-based relations. Barkin also offers the concept of "moral relativism".

With Barkin's IR theory of Realist Constructivism explained, I went on to point out the key political and economic developments since around the mid-20th century to the present, after which I briefly analyzed the FOIP strategy itself. Being geographically close to each other, both countries have a long history of interaction. At the time of Japan's invasion of China in the late 1930's Japan's militaristic ambitions, based on imperialistic values nullified the relationship between the two. Both countries underwent deep transformations soon after WWII had ended, which amongst others meant a change in value patterns. Japan accepted what its current leading figures characterize as "universal values", which include values such as democracy, freedom, human rights and peace. The change in value pattern, and a series of 'incidents' continue to define political relations between the two countries. The FOIP strategy clearly demonstrates how much attention Japan pays to promoting its values. Already in his earliest speech on what would eventually become the FOIP (prior to undergoing several name changes) the then Foreign Minister Taro Aso mentioned the term "universal values", and named the four aforementioned values. Closer to finalizing the future strategy, Prime Minister Abe spoke of key concepts of "freedom" and "the rule of law" in a speech. After the official announcement of the strategy in its current form, MOFA documents continue to imply the earlier mentioned values.

One of the reasons why Japan decides to leave the PRC out of this initiative is precisely because Japan considers that the PRC does not adhere to its values. In a chapter dedicated to Japan-PRC relations in the same 2021 Diplomatic Bluebook its authors openly

voice their discontent stating that the PRC should contribute to an “international order based on the rule of law”. In addition, multiple ‘incidents’ that have occurred between the two countries in the preceding decades continue to play a role in how Japan views the PRC. Of particular interest is the Senkaku Islands dispute. According to Japan, the PRC has continuously attempted to claim these islands, even though international law appropriates them to Japan. Because the PRC disregards international law, thus one of the values (rule of law) that Japan cherishes, this has consequences for how Japan formulates its foreign policy towards the PRC, and takes PRC’s disregard for a key value into account. This is the constructivist element of Barkin’s theory. The realist aspect of Barkin’s theory is that these same “universal values” are essentially used by Japan as part of a power struggle with the PRC when it excludes the PRC from an ambitious project, which involves the cooperation of many countries, and has such a broad scope. Power in this case is not so much measured in military capability, but on the principle of exclusiveness. The PRC is left out of the FOIP, which leads it to missing an important lever for potentially influencing Japan. From Japan’s perspective, because the PRC does not adhere to core values, Japan has a good excuse to leave the PRC out of this initiative.

All in all, the example with FOIP strategy in particular and the recent historical developments between the two countries in general show how Barkin’s theory of Realist Constructivism is capable of giving a comprehensive explanation of how International Relations between countries can function. The synthesis of Realism and Constructivism that Barkin offers in his theory allows the user to see the same topic under different points of view. Since its founding in 2003, Barkin’s IR theory of Realist Constructivism still remains fairly unknown within the broader International Relations discipline, which means that there are potentially many possibilities to continue expanding it. Barkin’s theory amongst others demonstrates that combining elements of different IR theories can indeed help better understand the complex developments and phenomena in the field of International Relations.

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